

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-06

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY KABUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 123475

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CPRS, CASC, SOCI, AF

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND RELIGIOUS
ORGANIZATIONS

REFS: KABUL (A) 4632; (B) 4508

1. THE REVEREND BILLY GRAHAM CALLED ASSISTANT SECRETARY SISCO JUNE 22 TO DISCUSS HIS CONCERN OVER DEMOLITION OF COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN KABUL. GRAHAM READ TEXT OF STATEMENT WHICH HE AND OTHER RELIGIOUS LEADERS CONSIDERING SENDING TO RGA. (SCHIFFERDECKER WILL CARRY TEXT OF STATEMENT TO KABUL.) GRAHAM SOUGHT INFORMATION ON STATUS OF SITUATION AND ADVICE WHETHER HE SHOULD SEEK SIGNATURE ON STATEMENT BY MRS. EISENHOWER.

2. SISCO INFORMED GRAHAM CHURCH NOW COMPLETELY DEMOLISHED, AND ADVISED HIM OF RGA VIEW THAT ISSUE IS CONFINED TO ILLEGAL LAND PURCHASE AND ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION. SISCO ALSO NOTED RGA'S ASSURANCE IT DOES NOT INTEND TO INTERFERE WITH CONGREGATION'S RIGHT TO WORSHIP. HE ALSO NOTED WE HAVE LEARNED THAT DR. ELSON,
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CHAPLAIN OF THE SENATE, AND NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS OF PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH DO NOT INTEND TO SIGN STATEMENT. SISCO EXPRESSED PERSONAL VIEW THAT IN CIRCUMSTANCES IT WOULD NOT BE ADVISABLE INVOLVE MRS. EISENHOWER IN STATEMENT.

3. GRAHAM RESPONDED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD SISCO SPEAKING UNOFFICIALLY, AND THAT HE WOULD NOT SEEK CONTACT MRS. EISENHOWER ON THIS ISSUE. HE FURTHER INDICATED SECOND THOUGHTS ON ADVISABILITY ADDING HIS OWN SIGNATURE TO STATEMENT. SISCO, AGAIN SPEAKING PERSONALLY, SAID IT MIGHT BE ADVISABLE NOT TO SIGN, BUT IF GRAHAM FELT HIS OWN POSITION REQUIRED HIS IDENTIFICATION WITH STATEMENT, THERE UNLIKELY TO BE SERIOUS REPERCUSSION WITH RGA.

4. AMBASSADOR MALIKYAR RAISED SUBJECT WITH CONSTABLE AND FLATEN JUNE 21, NOTING THAT HE HAS STARTED TO RECEIVE INQUIRIES ABOUT DESTRUCTION OF CHURCH. HE WAS TOLD THAT WHEN ASKED STATE HAS SAID THAT RGA HAS MADE DISTINCTION BETWEEN " ILLEGAL" PROPERTY AND BUILDING, AND CONGREGATION. ADDED HOWEVER, AS SUGGESTED REF B, THAT CONGREGATION SEEMS UNEASY AND SOME GESTURE OF REASSURANCE TO CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN KABUL MIGHT NOW BE TIMELY. WE DO NOT KNOW IF MALIKYAR WILL FOLLOW UP, BUT IN LIGHT OF HIS SENSITIVITY TO CRITICISM IN PRESS AND PUBLIC, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT HE WILL.

5. MALIKYAR APPARENTLY HAS NOT BEEN CHANNEL FOR COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN DR. KARIM AND RAY KNIGHTON (REF A). KNIGHTON'S OFFICE TOLD US THEY HAD RECEIVED TELEGRAM DIRECTLY FROM DR. KARIM, AND HAD REPLIED BY LENGTHY LETTER JUNE 18. DR. KNIGHTON TOLD DESK TODAY THAT HE TENTATIVELY PLANS RETURN KABUL ON OR ABOUT JUNE 27, SUBJECT TO ADVICE FROM MAP PERSONNEL WHOM HE TRYING REACH BY PHONE. KNIGHTON ALSO SAID MAP DID NOT RPT NOT SUPPORT " STATEMENT OF CONCERN" MENTIONED PARS 1-3 ABOVE. ROGERS

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